

Amendments to the Claims

Please amend claims as shown in the attached "Amended Claims" section by deleting those sections indicated by strike-through and adding those sections indicated by underlining.

Amended Claims

Claims:

1. (withdrawn) In a luggage case having at least one outer shell, the shell in turn having a generally broad face, this broad face formed of a fabric panel, the improvement comprising an injection molded frame attached to an edge of the fabric panel, and an autogenously formed bond between the frame and the fabric panel.
2. (withdrawn) In the luggage case of Claim 1 wherein the shell has a series of walls upstanding from the broad face, the injection molded frame integrally forming the series of upstanding walls.
3. (withdrawn) In the luggage case of Claim 2 wherein the upstanding series of walls consist of a back wall, a front wall, and side walls extending between the front wall and the back wall.
4. (withdrawn) In a luggage case having at least one outer shell, the shell in turn having a generally broad face, this broad face formed of a fabric panel, the improvement comprising an injection molded frame attached to an edge of the fabric panel, the injection molded frame integrally forming a series of upstanding walls consisting of a back wall, a front wall, and side walls extending between the front wall and the back wall, and an autogenously formed bond between the frame and the fabric panel wherein the back wall includes integrally formed hinges for hingedly attaching the shell to the rest of the luggage case.
5. (withdrawn) In the luggage case of Claim 2 wherein the front wall includes at least one latching device for selectively holding the shell to the rest of the luggage case.

6. (withdrawn) In the luggage case of Claim 1 wherein the panel further includes a layer of textile fabric and a layer of a foam polymer to stiffen the textile fabric layer.

7. (withdrawn) In the luggage case of Claim 1 wherein the bond between the frame and fabric panel extends around substantially the entire periphery of the panel.

8. (currently amended) In the luggage case of claim 2319 wherein the fabric and the foam layer are laminated to one another to form a laminated panel having a periphery, the periphery of the panel having an edge portion upstanding from the major dimension of the panel, the extreme edge of the peripheral edge portion having a cut edge, the cut edge being hidden by the injection molded frame attached thereto.

9. (currently amended) In a luggage case having at least one outer shell, the shell in turn having a generally broad face, this broad face formed of a fabric panel, the improvement comprising an injection molded frame attached to an edge of the fabric panel, and an autogenously formed bond between the frame and the edge of the fabric panel, wherein the autogenously formed bond is formed during the manufacturing of the frame, and wherein the autogenously formed bond between the frame and fabric panel extends around substantially the entire periphery of the panel, and effects a tidy, seamless mating of the panel and the frame whereby the autogenously formed bond remains generally hidden from a user and wherein the panel further includes a layer of textile fabric and a layer of a foam polymer and has a thickness dimension perpendicular to the major dimension and generally equal to the thickness of the fabric and the foam layer, but the thickness of the extreme edge thereof being substantially less than the thickness dimension.

10. (withdrawn) In the luggage case of claim 2 wherein the frame further includes a thick section adjacent the series of wall, the thick section including the autogenous bond.

11. (withdrawn) A process of forming a shell of a luggage case from a laminated panel having a peripheral edge portion, and made of a foam panel layer and a fabric covering and an injection molded frame, comprising the steps of positioning the peripheral edge portion inside an injection mold for forming the frame, and injecting plastic material into the mold to form an autogenous bond between the plastic material and the edge portion.

12. (withdrawn) A process of forming a shell of a luggage case as set forth in claim 11 wherein the step of positioning includes holding the edge portion against an inside surface of an injection mold for forming the frame, and injecting fluid plastic into the mold while maintaining the peripheral edge portion against the inside surface of the mold.

13. (withdrawn) A process of forming a shell of a luggage case as set forth in Claim 12 wherein the inside surface of the mold is a surface that forms an inside surface of the finished shell.

14. (withdrawn) A process of forming a shell of a luggage case as set forth in Claim 12 including leading the plastic material to a portion of the mold adjacent to the peripheral edge portion before substantially filling the mold with plastic material, whereby the plastic material adjacent the peripheral edge portion helps to maintain the peripheral edge portion against the inside surface of the mold.

15. (withdrawn) A process of forming a shell of a luggage case as set forth in claim 14 further including supplying a mold cavity having a portion thereof sized to create relatively thin web portions of the frame, and a thick portion immediately adjacent to the peripheral edge portion, and introducing the plastic material into the mold cavity at the thick portion, whereby the plastic material preferentially fills the thick portion prior to filling the remainder of the mold cavity.

16. (withdrawn) A process of forming a shell of a luggage case as set forth in claim 15 further including the step of introducing into the thick portion a second fluid along with the plastic material, whereby a hollow section is formed in the thick portion of the completed shell.

17. (withdrawn) A process of forming a shell of a luggage case as set forth in claim 16 wherein the second fluid is a gas.

18. (withdrawn) A process of forming a shell of a luggage case as set forth in claim 16 wherein the second fluid is a blowing agent.

19. (currently amended) In a luggage case having at least one outer shell, this shell in turn having a generally broad face, this broad face formed of a fabric panel with edge portions surrounding its periphery, the improvement comprising an injection molded frame attached to and extending beyond the edge portion of the fabric panel, and an autogenously formed bond between the frame and the edge portion of the fabric panel, wherein the autogenously formed bond is formed during the manufacturing of the frame, and results in a seamless, hidden joint between said panel and said frame as well as a smooth, taut surface of said panel wherein the frame comprises a series of relatively thin upstanding walls and a relatively thick edge portion adjacent the series of walls, the relatively thick portion including said autogenous bond.

20. (previously presented) In the luggage case of claim 19 wherein the upstanding series of walls consist of a back wall, a front wall, and side walls extending between the front wall and the back wall.

21. (previously presented) In the luggage case of claim 20 wherein the back wall includes integrally formed hinges for hingedly attaching the shell to the rest of the luggage case.

22. (previously presented) In the luggage case of claim 19 wherein the upstanding front wall includes at least one latching device for selectively holding the shell to the rest of the luggage case.

23. (previously presented) In the luggage case of claim 19 wherein the fabric panel includes a layer of textile fabric and a layer of foam polymer to stiffen the textile fabric layer.

24. (new) In the luggage case of claim 19 wherein the peripheral edge of the panel is positioned against an inner surface of said frame.

25. (new) In the luggage case of claim 19 wherein the panel comprises a continuous invagination that extends around an inner surface of the panel adjacent to the edge portion of the panel, said invagination being dimensioned to accommodate shrinkage between the hot injection molded peripheral frame and the relatively dimensionally stable panel such that said panel, once said injection molded frame has cooled, is smooth and undistorted in structure.

26. (new) In the luggage case of claim 25 wherein said panel consists of a second invagination.

27. (new) In a luggage case having at least one outer shell, the shell having a generally broad face, this broad face formed of a panel having edge portions that comprise a periphery, the improvement comprising an invagination along an edge of the panel dimensioned such that the panel can move and stretch thereby maintaining a smooth, wrinkle-free, visually appealing appearance and durable structure after the panel has been autogenously affixed, without visible seams and without visible attachment means, to the shell that has been injection molded in direct contact with the panel.

28. (new) In the luggage case of claim 27, wherein said shell further comprises smooth, rounded corners.

29. (new) In the luggage case of claim 27, wherein said shell further comprises three-sided, triangularly-shaped corners, inherent to clamshell-type luggage cases.

30. (new) In the luggage case of claim 19 wherein the thick edge portion of the frame comprises a hollow peripheral line of beading that is adjacent the peripheral edge of the panel, said thick edge portion sized to optimize the flow of the molten material during injection molding so that a secure positioning between the thickened portion of the frame and the panel is maintained, resulting in a strong bond between the frame and the panel that results in a smooth exterior surface of said panel once the molten material has cooled.